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THE SILENCE OF JOSEPHUS AND TACITUS.

IN the fierce attacks upon *Der vorchristliche Jesus*¹ precipitated by the adoption, accentuation, and popularization of its theses in the epoch-marking writings and lectures of Prof. Arthur Drews, conservative theologians have very properly declined to take part, thereby combining (as Bacon would say) serpentine wisdom with columbine innocence. They have clearly perceived that the movement was not directed against their position, but against the citadel of their century-old foe, who would reduce their Divinity to the ranks of men, and at least one of the very greatest of them (in a letter to the present writer) rejoiced sincerely at beholding the sudden fall of that adversary. No! It is the liberal critic, so long enthroned in the seats of learning, who has been amazed to see his central concept of the purely human Jesus put on trial for its life and more than half-convicted, and who, *ingemiscens tamquam reus*, has now for nearly a twelve-month plied an unavailing pen in passionate protest against the audacity of this "assault upon the liberal theology."

In the sallies of the besieged much weight has been laid upon profane testimonies, particularly of Josephus and Tacitus. It is Chwolson in St. Petersburg that has bared his arm of might over the Josephine section;² it is Von Soden in Berlin that has stressed so strongly the

¹ Giessen, Alfred Töpelmann, 1906.

² *Ueber die Frage ob Jesus gelebt hat.*

Tacitean chapter.³ However much we may reverence these scholars in their cooler moments, it is not easy to take these impassioned utterances seriously. They do not indeed take each other seriously. The very section that Chwolson so eagerly defends, Von Soden declares (p. 11) to be "undoubtedly interpolation" by Christian hands. Involuntarily one recalls the famous appeal "from Philip drunk to Philip sober," and wonders how these "higher critics" (who are much higher than deep) will write tomorrow. To track down the endless inaccuracies and fallacies of their hasty superficialities would be a weary and bootless task, like chasing field-mice in autumn: stamp them out here, and lo they stir the soil yonder. In this case to be just would be cruel; we can afford to be generous and to pass over these *Flugschriften* as too flighty for detailed notice.

However, the passages in question do really call for a calm and careful and thoroughgoing treatment, such certainly as they have not yet received in this furious Battle of the Booklets, and to such an examination we now invite the patient attention of the reader.

When the liberal critic is called on to justify his dogma of the mere humanity of the Jesus, his only recourse must be to some form of historical record. A merely human life is a matter merely of human history, to which accordingly appeal must be made. The history is either sacred or profane. The testimony of the former is not here in debate and besides has been examined closely elsewhere by the present writer. Of profane history the witness is "brief, but endless" if indeed there be any such witness at all. The first and by all odds the most important is found in the *Antiquities* of the Jewish historian Josephus, precisely the work in which one would search for it with the liveliest interest and the greatest confidence. The attestation as

³ *Hat Jesus gelebt?* and in *Berliner Religionsgespräch*, p. 39.

we read it now is clear, decisive, and unequivocal. Accepted at its face value it settles forever the question that now so agitates the head and heart of Germany. It deserves then the most conscientious and open-minded scrutiny.

Such a scrutiny discloses in the first place that the chapter in which the deposition is found is *concerned exclusively with calamities that overtook the Jews*. It is sandwiched between two other sections that tell of bloody disasters that befell God's people at Rome and Jerusalem. Now unless this passage itself tells of some sanguinary misfortune to his countrymen—and in spite of Chwolson it is hopelessly absurd and ridiculous to attempt any such construction—it seems impossible that Josephus should have introduced it in this connection. We make this preliminary observation in hope that the reader will bear it constantly in mind from the very start, and because it is of itself absolutely decisive against the whole section and against every emendation thereof that apologetic ingenuity can suggest. There is not one word of the entire passage that can stand against this single consideration, namely, that all the rest of the chapter, both before and after, is devoted to the afflictions that scourged the countrymen of the historian.

Here then is this famous section reproduced in its (condensed) context:

Archeology, Book XVIII, chap. III.

§ 1. Pilate, procurator of Judea, removes the army from Cæsarea to Jerusalem for winter quarters and against all precedent brings Cæsar's effigies by night into the Holy City. The Jews flock to Cæsarea protesting for five days, but in vain: the sixth day Pilate forms a plan to massacre them, but struck with their heroic devotion in laying down their bared necks he relents and orders back the images from Jerusalem to Cæsarea.

§ 2. Pilate undertakes to supply Jerusalem with water,

using sacred money. The Jews protest clamorously and abusively. So he distributes among the populace soldiers in citizens' dress; at a signal (when the Jews refused to disperse) the soldiers draw their concealed daggers and slaughter: "And they bore themselves no way mildly, so that the people, being caught unarmed by the soldiers attacking fully prepared, many of them perished thus and some ran away wounded. And so the sedition was stopped.

3. "And there appeared at this time Jesus, a wise man, if man indeed it be lawful to call him. For he was a doer of marvelous works, (a) teacher of men that receive the truth with pleasure. And many Jews and many too of the Hellenic (race) he brought over to himself. This was the Christ. And when on the evidence of the first men among us Pilate had condemned him to the cross, they did not cease who had loved him at first, for he appeared to them on the third day again alive, the divine prophets having spoken both these and myriad other wondrous things about him. And (even) until now the tribe of the Christians, named from him, is not extinct."

4. "And about the same time another terrible misfortune⁴ confounded the Jews". . . . Then follows the story of the deflowering of Paulina in the temple of Isis by Mundus personating Anubis, and of the punishment of this sacrilege by Tiberius, who demolished the temple and crucified the offenders all but the principal, Mundus himself.

5. The misfortune of the Jews: 4000 are banished from Rome for the wickedness of four, a Rabbi and three confederates, who procured gifts from Fulvia, wife of Saturninus, under false pretences.

We can hardly covet the critical insight that sees in this § 3 the hand of Josephus. *The chapter deals solely with the misfortunes of the Jews at Caesarea, at Jerusalem,*

⁴ ἑτέρον τι δεινόν.

at Rome. The Section 3 is entirely out of relation to its context.

Moreover, that § 4 follows immediately upon § 2 is plain to see in the words "*another calamity.*" The obvious reference is to the preceding massacre in Jerusalem. *There is no possible reference to this § 3.*

Furthermore, the style is not that of the historian. It is plain, straightforward, uninvolved, in contrast with the tangled meshes of the Josephine sentence.

Still more, however, and decisively, *the writer of § 3 is a Christian.* He declares positively, "This was the Christ."⁵ Posing as Josephus, he says of Jesus "wise man," but instantly corrects himself, "if man indeed it is lawful to call him"; he describes Jesus as a doer of prodigies, as a teacher of the truth; he affirms distinctly the resurrection, "he appeared the third day again alive"; he accepts the whole body of ten thousand wonders told of him as Messiah and foretold of him by the divine prophets. Such faith as this, and such an open avowal, might satisfy even the Holy Office of the Inquisition.

Once again, the phraseology smacks strongly of the New Testament. Thus *γίνεται* in the sense of *comes* (Mark i. 4; John i. 6; 2 Peter ii. 1; 1 John ii. 18) and the change from past to present tense;⁶ "that receive the truth with pleasure";⁷ compare "the principal men" with "the head men"⁸ of the Gospels, Acts, Epistles; also "they that loved him at first" with John xiii. 1, "having loved his own in the world, he loved them to the end"; also the "myriad wonders" with John xxi. 25, "The world could not contain the books that would be written."

Finally the phrase "until now" recalls the New Testa-

⁵ ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν.

⁶ So also *παραδίδων*, as in Luke v. 26, *εἶδαμεν παράδοξα σήμερον*.

⁷ Cf. Luke viii. 13, "receive the word with joy"; Acts xvii. 11, "received the word with all zeal"; James i. 21, "receive in meekness the engrafted word."

⁸ ἄρχοντες.

ment "unto this day" (Matt. xxviii. 15) and indicates similarly a late date for the paragraph, surely later than A. D. 80, when Josephus wrote his *Archeology*. Schürer observes (§ 17, footnote 24) that "Josephus has certainly been interpolated by a Christian hand"; and in view of all the foregoing there should be no hesitancy in bracketing this section, with the great editor Bekker, as spurious.

To this internal evidence comes the decisive external fact that the section was unknown to Origen. This most learned of the Fathers, in his polemic against Celsus, had frequent and pressing occasion to use every scrap of outlying testimony to the Christian thesis assailed. As we shall immediately see he quotes copiously and repeatedly from Josephus witnessing concerning James the Just; he had every occasion and every motive to quote this incomparably far more relevant and far more important witness concerning the Christ. That he never calls it in evidence, is morally conclusive proof that he did not know of its existence, which can only mean that it was not in Origen's copy of Josephus. No attempt yet made to evade this conclusion seems worthy of any notice. The fact that the passage is not mentioned by still earlier writers, as Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and others, affords corroboration if any be needed.

It seems then that the non-Josephine origin of this section is indicated unambiguously by almost every kind of evidence that can be available in such matters. Its testimony would appear to be not for but distinctly against the position it was invented to support; for men do not fabricate documents to corroborate the true but to recommend the false. Let us not insist on this, however, but remain content with the obvious fact, that on the most favorable reckoning possible, the section labors under the gravest suspicion and can attest nothing save that itself is in the direst need of attestation.

Here at the outset it may be well to observe that the general hypothesis of Christian interpolation needs no vindication and involves no improbability. For that it is a fact in countless cases is admitted on all hands. Leaving aside the New Testament for the present, the list of outright pseudonymous Christian compositions, universally so recognized, is long and formidable. It is not necessary to burden these pages with any such list, since such lists are easily accessible and the general fact is nowhere in dispute. Moreover, of works probably genuine, it is the rare exception that has escaped interpolation. Jewish works were regularly adapted to Christian use by this approved process of intercalating Christian sentiments, dogmas, or allusions. Witness the Sibylline Oracles, the Testaments of the Patriarchs, and the Jewish Apocrypha in general. So far then from being antecedently improbable, such interpolation is very probable antecedently, it is more likely than not. Nevertheless, to leave a wider margin of safety, we shall employ this form of argument sparingly, not wherever its use is possible, but only where it is recommended by independent considerations.

A second reference of Josephus to Jesus might be imagined in the following paragraph (*Arch.* XX, 9. 1) treating of the death of James, "the brother of the Lord":

"Ananus, then, being such (as I have said), fancying he had now a fitting opportunity, since Festus was dead and Albinus was still on the road, assembles a Sanhedrin of judges, and having brought thither *the Brother of Jesus, him called Christ (James was his name)*, and some certain *others* and having made accusations (against them as) lawbreakers, he delivered them to be stoned."

The words in italics⁹ have been bracketed as spurious, —we think, correctly. Neander and others defend them,

⁹ τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ (Ἰάκωβος ὄνομα αὐτῷ) and καὶ ἑτέρους.

and McGiffert says (*The Church History of Eus.*, p. 127, n. 39), "It is very difficult to suppose that a Christian in interpolating the passage, would have referred to James as the brother of the '*so-called* Christ.'"¹⁰ Indeed! On the contrary, it is just because this phrase is the most approved Christian, evangelic, and canonic, that we suspect it in Josephus. It meets us in Matt. i. 16; xxvii. 17, 22; John iv. 25. The depreciatory "so" is not in the Greek. Thus we read of "Simon the one called Peter" (Matt. iv. 18; x. 2), "the high-priest the one called Caiaphas" (Matt. xxvi. 3), "the feast the one called Passover" (Luke xxii. 1), "the man, the one called Jesus" (John ix. 11), "Thomas the one called Didymus" (John xi. 16; xx. 24; xxi. 2), "gate the one called Beautiful" (Acts iii. 2), "tent the one called Holy of Holies" (Heb. ix. 3), where depreciation is out of the question. The indication is merely that of a surname or nickname or name in some way peculiar or extraordinary.

It seems incredible that Josephus should throw in such an observation at this stage without any preparation or explanation or occasion. Moreover, it is certain that Josephus has been interpolated elsewhere by Christian hands, and with precisely this same phrase, for Origen thrice quotes as from Josephus the statement that the Jewish sufferings at the hands of Titus were a divine retribution for the slaying of James: "Josephus says in his Archeology, 'According to wrath of God these things came upon them, for the things dared by them against James, the brother of Jesus the one called Christ'. . . . And he says that 'the people too thought they suffered these things on account of James.'"¹⁰ (463) in *Mat.* XIII. 55. "The same [Josephus] seeking the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and of the demolition of the Temple. . . . says, 'These [calamities] befell the Jews in vengeance for James the Just who was

¹⁰ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ.

brother of Jesus the one called Christ, since indeed they slew him though being most just.'” *Contra C.* I, 47. “Titus demolished Jerusalem, as Josephus writes, on account of James the Just, the brother of Jesus the one called Christ”—*Contra C.* II, 13 *fn.* The passage is still found in some Josephus manuscripts, but as it is wanting in others it is and must be regarded as a Christian interpolation older than Origen (against Hilgenfeld, *Einleitung*, p. 526, who thinks the passage has been expunged from Christian manuscripts of Josephus!). Now since this phrase is certainly interpolated in the one place, the only reasonable conclusion is that it is interpolated in the other. This notion that the death of James was avenged in the siege of Jerusalem is found in the bud in Hegesippus, who says: “And so he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot beside the temple. . . . This man became a true witness both to Jews and to Greeks that Jesus is the Christ. And straightway Vespasian besieges them” (Eus., *H. E.* II. 23, 18).

But does not the phrase itself attest the mere humanity of the Jesus? Now it is plain that if James or any one else was really the flesh-and-blood brother of the Lord or of Jesus, then this latter was assuredly pure-human. But is flesh-and-blood kinship meant by the term “brother”? It is not certain, it is not even probable. Winckler (in *Arabisch-Semitisch-Orientalisch*) and others have shown us how broad is the notion of brother in the East. In the New Testament itself the term is used continually, regularly, to denote religious relation without the remotest hint of blood kinship. In the West and to-day it is similarly used of all members of an organization secular as well as religious. In the Gospels¹¹ Jesus himself is made to ask, “who are my brothers?” And he answers, “They that do

¹¹ Matt. xii. 46-50; Mk. iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 21. See also Matt. xxv. 40; xxviii. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 5; Gal. i. 19.

the will of my Father in Heaven." Here then in the most ancient church we find distinct declaration that to be "Brother of Jesus" was to keep the law, to do the will of the Father in Heaven. Now it was precisely this punctilious fulfilment of the law for which this James the Just was famous. This fact is well known and universally admitted, so that it stands in no need of formal proof.

In Acts we hear a good deal of this James, but only in this character as the leader of the law-abiding disciples. No less an authority than Jerome (A. D. 387) has expressed the correct idea on this point. In commenting on Gal. i. 19 he says (in sum): "James was called the Lord's brother on account of his high character, his incomparable faith, and his extraordinary wisdom; the other apostles are also called brothers (John xx. 17) but he pre-eminently so, to whom the Lord at his departure had committed the sons of his mother" (i. e., the members of the church at Jerusalem). Similarly Origen. From 1 Cor. ix. 5 we see with distinctness that there was a class of Messianists, nearly coordinate with the Apostles, bearing the honored name of "Brothers of the Jesus," or "of the Lord"; also a class called "Brothers of Kephaz." Hence in Corinth some said, "I am of Kephaz"; others, "I am of Christ."

Indeed, it is never hinted that James was really consanguineous with Jesus. We hold then that this term "Brother of the Lord" does by no means imply any family kinship, that it most probably designates a class of earnest Messianists, zealots of obedience, and we venture to set them in close relation with the Corinthian "Those of the Christ."¹² Surely if a sect of early Messianists were known as particularly "They of the Christ," it is highly likely that they or some similar group should be known as "Brothers of the Lord" or of "Jesus." Especially does this seem in-

¹² οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

trinsically probable when we remember that there is no evidence that this name was employed before the notion of the earthly human life of Jesus was already established or at least establishing itself. That zealots should then call themselves and their earlier leader "Brothers of Jesus" is no stranger than that Loyola should found the "Society of Jesus." Besides we must never forget that names of the Christians did greatly abound, such as Saints, Disciples, Called, Elect, "of Paul," "of Peter," "of Christ," Nazareans, Gnostics, the Perfect, Pneumatics, and others. From all of which we conclude that the phrase in question, no matter when first used, nor by whom, nor of whom, by no means implies any kinship or furnishes any proof of the pure-human character of Jesus.

The next reference to Christ by a profane writer is found in Tacitus:¹³

"Sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederetur. Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. Igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud proinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. Et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contexti laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus adfixi aut flammandi, atque, ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. Hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat et circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel curriculo insistens. Unde quamquam adversus fontes et novissima exempla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur.—*Annals*, XV, 44.

With respect to this famous passage we must observe first, that *if it be genuine*, it was written in the first quarter

¹³ For the translation and the context see *infra*.

of the second century, near the close of the last work of the great historian, most probably after the death of Trajan (A. D. 117). At the most then it records only a report accepted at that time among Christians. Now it is not at all strange that the fiction (if it be a fiction) of the death under Pilate should be current at that date, nearly three generations after the feigned event. If such a report originated at all, it originated (gradually to be sure) at some time most probably in the first century; it may easily then have obtained currency and reached the ears of Tacitus before A. D. 110. Its reproduction, at his hands, then, merely attests its existence at that date, but in no degree attests its correctness.

Thus far on the supposition that the passage proceeds from Tacitus;—we need make no other supposition for the purposes of our argument. Let it be genuine, if you will; it proves nothing that is worth debate. Since he has never attached any argumentative importance to the passage, the mind of the writer may be fairly supposed to be in a measure unprejudiced, and as a mere matter of critical candor he must not disguise from the reader that he most gravely doubts its genuineness. It has indeed been speciously contended of late that Poggio Bracciolini was the author of the *Annals*,¹⁴ but there are very cogent reasons against this contention. This whole section, however, reads very much like fabrication or at least emendation of a Christian hand. Among other suspicious circumstances may be noted the following:

A. Such a remarkable persecution as here described, and such a passage from such an author, must have deeply impressed the early Christian mind. There is nothing else nearly equal to either in pagan history and literature of that century. We should expect them to stand out con-

¹⁴ *Tacitus and Bracciolini. The Annals Forged in the Fifteenth Century*, London, 1878.

spicuous in the memories and memorials of the following generations. We know how zealously the data of martyrdom were cherished and even invented at an early period. It is inconceivable, then, that an event so supremely memorable should have escaped all record and all reference. Yet what is the state of case? *Early tradition is absolutely silent about both the Neronian persecution and the Tacitean testimony.* Paul would seem to have been in Rome about that time (A. D. 64). Surely he would have been involved somehow in the proceedings. Yet there is no allusion to any part he played in the tragedy. True, in 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, we read, "For already I pour myself out as offering, and the time of my dissolution is come; I have fought the good fight, have finished the course, have kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give me in that day, the Just Judge, and not only to me but to all who have loved his appearing." But in verses 16 and 17 the scene shifts suddenly: "At my first defense none was for me, but all forsook me—let it not be reckoned against them—but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, that through me the preaching might be fulfilled and all the nations hear: and I was delivered from (the) lion's mouth. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me unto his kingdom the heavenly."

Again in verse 11 all have deserted him but one: "Luke only is with me." But in verses 19-21 he is surrounded by a numerous company, "Eubulus and Pudens, and Linus and Claudia, and the brethren all." Out of such contradictions nothing can be made, save only that there is no hint at anything like the Neronian persecution. The writer or writers seem not to have known any tradition concerning it, which they could work into these pastorals.

The first Epistle of Peter, addressed to the elect of the dispersion in Northern Asia Minor, is much concerned with

the persecution and "fiery trial" that has overtaken them, but though apparently written from Rome ("Babylon," v. 13) it contains not the remotest reference to the "fiery trial" through which it is supposed the church there had passed. Some reference, however, under such circumstances, would seem to be so natural as to be almost inevitable.

Not even in the Apocalypse do we find any clear or even probable allusion to an event that would have bulked so hugely in the early Christian consciousness. On this point we need not enlarge; enough to refer to the works of Mommsen and Neumann; even Furneaux admits that "The supposed references. . . are certainly in great part to be otherwise explained," though he still thinks there "are points in which such allusions can hardly be excluded," an opinion that seems to be the last remnant of departing prejudice. Why then did the Apocalypticist not refer to this tremendous persecution distinctly or at least unequivocally, if he had ever heard thereof?

Turning now to Clement of Rome, we find him (C. 5) very naturally setting before the eyes of his correspondents "the noble examples that belong to our generation." The fierce persecution detailed by Tacitus must have been perfectly known to him, yet he seems never to have heard of it. The sufferings of Peter he attributes to "unrighteous jealousy." "Not one nor two but more trials he underwent and so having borne witness he fared to the appointed place of glory. By reason of jealousy and strife Paul exemplified the prize of patience. Seven times cast into bonds, exiled, stoned, made preacher both in east and west, he received the noble renown of his faith, having taught the whole world righteousness and come to the bounds of the west, and having borne witness before the rulers, so he departed from the world and fared unto the holy place, having become a chiefest pattern of patience." We do not

pretend to know the exact meaning of such words; it seems doubtful whether Clement himself knew. But it seems certain that they convey no hint of the Neronic persecution as described in the Annals; nay more, they seem to imply unmistakably that their author had never heard of any such "fiery trial."

Passing to the "Ignatians," we find the letter to the Romans written in a style and mood of extreme exaltation. "Ignatius" yearns passionately for the arena, he longs to be ground as wheat by the teeth of wild beasts. Surely if he had ever heard of the terrible experience of the Romans themselves such a rhetorician would have let some hint escape him. But he does not, and his silence appears to admit of but the one and the same explanation.

It is superfluous to pass in review the other Christian writers of this era. They are consistently dumb on the subject under discussion, and their collective stillness makes the argument from silence as convincing as in the nature of the case it ever can be.

Far down the stream of history, over one hundred years from the date of the conflagration, we find at last, in a fragment quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.* IV, 26) from a *Libellus* addressed to Antoninus (Aurelius) by Melito, Bishop of Sardis (near A. D. 170), the first Christian allusion to Nero as an enemy of Christians. It declares: "For *what has never before happened*, the race of the pious is now suffering persecution, being driven about in Asia by new decrees. . . . for our philosophy formerly flourished among the barbarians, but having sprung up among the nations under thy rule, during the great reign of thy ancestor Augustus, it became to thine empire especially a blessing of auspicious omen. And the most convincing proof that our doctrine flourished for the good of an empire happily begun, is this—that there has no evil happened since Augustus's reign, . . . only Nero and Domitian, per-

suaded by certain calumnious men, wished to slander our doctrine, from whom also it has come to pass that the falsehood has been handed down by unreasonable custom of information ('sycophancy') against such (Christians)." One moment we may pause to note that the good bishop goes back to the reign of Augustus for the origin of "our philosophy," which had already existed among the "barbarians" (i. e., the Jews,—Tatian calls the Jewish Scriptures "barbaric,")¹⁵ and which must then have been essentially monotheism,—and then we observe that he has apparently *no knowledge and no idea* of the Neronian persecution as now set forth in Tacitus, and that he is arguing that good emperors have tolerated while only the wicked have discountenanced Christianity. Hence he adds: "But thy pious fathers corrected their ignorance, having frequently rebuked in writing many who dared to attempt new measures against them"—in evidence whereof he refers to Adrian's Epistle to Fundanus and to many others.

No new furrow need be driven through the field so well plowed by Keim, Overbeck, Mommsen, Schiller, Lightfoot, Ramsay, and others. It is enough that Melito, who seems to have been so exceedingly well versed in the relation of Christianity to the state, still gives no hint of anything resembling the Tacitean persecution. And yet to do so would have suited the purposes of his argument admirably. With great force he could have said: "Nero the matricide, the worst of men, Nero did indeed persecute us atrociously, to hide his own iniquity, as your own historian Tacitus bears witness, and behold what swift and just and terrible vengeance overtook him!" How could Melito have failed to make such a telling and obvious point?

Another descent brings us to Tertullian, who admittedly knew and made use of Melito's booklet in his own *Apologeticum*. His argument is the same, that good govern-

¹⁵ In describing his own conversion (Address to the Greeks, c. 29).

ment favored and bad government disfavored the Christians, but he is far more reckless in assertion. He declares (C. 5) that "Tiberius, when intelligence reached him from Syria Palestine of what had there revealed truth of Divinity itself, reported to the Senate with the weight (*praerogativa*) of his own vote. The Senate, because it had not itself tested, rejected (his proposal); Cæsar maintained his judgment, threatening peril to accusers of Christians." Let the reader not be surprised at such history made to order. "Consult your records (*commentarios*), there you will find Nero the first that raged with Cæsarean sword against this sect when rising most at Rome. But in such a founder of our condemnation we glory even, for whoso knows him can understand that only something signally good was condemned by Nero. Domitian too made trial, a portion of Nero in cruelty, but being also man readily he checked his own beginning, restoring even whom he had banished. Such always our persecutors, unjust, impious, base, whom you yourselves are wont to condemn, those condemned by whom you are wont to restore."

Here one begins to suspect that Nero is made to play the rôle of persecutor only because he was so perfectly suited to the part. But even Tertullian reveals no notion of such a Neronian persecution as we read of in Tacitus. Yet he was acquainted with this historian, whose *Historiae* he cites at length (C. 16), on whose name he puns, whom he cordially hates for defaming the Jews. Had he read of Nero's burning the Christians alive, would he have used such vague and commonplace imagery as "raged with Cæsarean sword" and "through Nero's cruelty they sowed Christian blood"? Remember that Tertullian was a rhetorician to his finger-tips—would he have neglected such an exceptional opportunity for the display of his thrice-favorite art?

It seems needless to discuss still later testimony, as that

of Lactantius (*De mort. persec.* 2), of Origen (*Eus. H. E.* III, 1) of Eusebius (*H. E.* II, 25), and of Jerome; these late writers have at last learned after two centuries or more of ignorance that Peter and Paul fell victims to Neronian fury, but they still have no idea that Nero falsely accused the Christians of setting the city on fire, nor do they hint that a "vast multitude" lit up the Roman night with the flames of their burning bodies. Not until the fourth century, in Ep. 12 of the forged correspondence of Paul and Seneca, do we read that "Christians and Jews, as if contrivers of (a) conflagration, when put to death are wont to be burned." But even here the allusion, if there be any, to the Neronian persecution is extremely vague.

It must be added that the Jews are here associated with the Christians, that they could hardly have been sharply separated in Rome A. D. 64, that they far more than Christians were open to the charge of hatred of the human race ("Against all others, hostile hate"—Tacitus, *H.* 5, 2), that they had already felt twice in Rome (under Tiberius and under Claudius) the weight of the imperial hand, that Lucan, Pliny, Persius, Seneca—all writers of that era, speak of the Jews with sharpness, never of the Christians, and it will appear practically impossible that they could have escaped in any such persecution as the Tacitean. But if they did not escape, if they suffered, this must have been known to their great historian and champion, Josephus, who was a young man at the time.

Now this writer in his *Archeology* (XX, 8, 3) protests against the gross inaccuracies and falsehoods of the biographers of Nero, both favorable and unfavorable, while disclaiming any intention to correct or supplement them in general; "But what things befell us Jews we shall exhibit with great accuracy¹⁶ shrinking to show plainly neither our calamities nor our sins." If then even a few

¹⁶ οὐ παρέργως.

Jews had fallen victims in the capital to Neronian calumny and savagery, there seems to be no doubt that Josephus would have known and noted it. Yet he gives not the slightest hint that any such rumor had ever reached his ears.

Here then we stand in presence of the unbroken and universal silence of over two hundred years concerning an alleged event of capital importance, transacted in the very center of knowledge and information and rumor, yet never once mentioned by any one among many whose especial interest it was to tell of it often and to dwell on it at length. Nor can any one suggest the slightest reason for this silence, for this studied suppression of a highly momentous and dramatic incident in a reign that was a favorite subject of historic delineation and that lent itself especially to high coloring and picturesque exaggeration. Such considerations seem ample to weight the scale heavily against the genuineness of the passage in question.

B. On looking more narrowly at the whole Tacitean context, we find that it suggests quite independently many doubts kindred and hardly less grave. The account of the great fire extends through six chapters beginning with the 38th: "Follows a disaster, whether by chance or by guile of the prince, is uncertain." A vivid description is given. Chapter 39 tells how Nero did not return from Antium till the flames approached (as they ultimately devoured) his house. He took instant and popular measures to relieve the homeless and destitute, but "without avail, since rumor had gone abroad that at the very moment of the city in flames he had gone upon a private stage and sung the Fall of Troy, likening present ills to ancient calamities." Chapter 40 tells of the end put to the conflagration at foot of the Esquiline, and of its second outburst involving fewer deaths but more widespread destruction. Chapter 41 enumerates some of the elements of the fearful loss. Chapter

42 tells how "Nero made use of his country's ruins and erected a house" in which the genius and audacity of Severus and Celer would defiantly outvie the prodigality of Nature herself. It seems plain that the immense achievements and immenser conceptions of these architects and landscape gardeners must have required years for their elaboration and even partial execution. Chapter 43 tells of the rebuilding of Rome itself not in the old irregular fashion, but "with rows of streets measured out, with wide-wayed spaces, with limited height of buildings, and areas laid open and colonnades added to protect the frontage of the tenements (*insularum*)."

This description is elaborated and what part Nero took in the rebuilding is emphasized. These changes pleased in general both by their utility and by their beauty, though some there were that said the old was better.

A city can not be rebuilt in such substantial fashion ("with stone from Gabii or Alba, impervious to fire") in a day or month or year, nor without enormous outlay of money, and the imperial treasury seems to have borne the weight of the expense. It is not strange then but nearly inevitable that the next chapter should continue thus: "Meanwhile by contributing funds Italy was laid waste throughout, provinces subverted and allied peoples and whatever states are called free. Even the gods fell a prey to this plunder," their temples being robbed of gold and votive offerings and even the images of the gods themselves.

It appears then that chapter 45 is the natural and almost inevitable continuation of chapter 43, stating the necessary consequences of the methods and aims of Nero as therein set forth. Between these two chapters thus so closely united in thought we now read chapter 44, *which has no intimate connection with either*.

"And these things (the gradual Neronian rebuilding)

were provided by human counsels. Next (*mox*) were sought propitiations to the gods and recourse was had to the Sibyl's books, whence followed supplication to Volcan and Ceres and Proserpine, and Juno was propitiated by matrons, first in the Capitol, then at the nearest point of the sea, with water drawn whence the temple and image of the goddess were sprinkled; and sacred banquets and night-long vigils did the women celebrate who had husbands. But not through human effort, not through largesses of the prince nor appeasements of the gods did the ill report subside, but still the fire was believed (to have been) ordered. Therefore to get rid of the rumor Nero substituted as guilty and subjected to most exquisite tortures (those) whom hated for their abominations the populace used to call Christians. The author of this name, Christus, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by procurator Pontius Pilate; and though repressed for the moment (this) pernicious superstition was breaking forth again, not only through Judea, source of this evil, but even through the capital where all things hideous or shameful pour together from everywhere and catch the crowd. Accordingly first were hurried away (to trial those) who confessed (the charge), then by information of these an immense multitude not so much for the crime of incendiarism as hatred of the human race were convicted (or conjoined, *convicti* or *conjuncti*). And to them perishing were added mockeries, (as) that clothed with hides of wild beasts they should die by mangling of dogs, or affixed to crosses or doomed to flames, and, when day had departed, should be burned for purpose of nocturnal illumination. Nero had offered his gardens for that spectacle and was exhibiting a circus show, mixing with the crowd in the garb of a charioteer or standing on a car. Whence although towards persons guilty and deserving the most exemplary punishment there arose pity, as if not for public

good but unto the savagery of one man they were being sacrificed."

Let the reader of this chapter thus literally translated judge whether it fits in with either chapter 43 or 45, which fall so naturally together. Let him note that the whole story is intrinsically improbable; that it implies a very old and long established and numerous church in Rome, and a hatred on the part of the people that seems at that time quite incredible; that no proper meaning can be attached to "were confessing"—confessing what? Arnold naturally replies, the charge of "firing the city." But that seems wholly incredible. Surely they had not fired it and would not lie against themselves. Ramsay thinks they confessed they were Christians, Von Soden even so translates it! Doubtless. But Christianity was not then a capital offense; it was only the crime of burning Rome that could bring down on them such condign punishment. Moreover these "first seized" not only confess but implicate an "immense multitude." In what? In firing the city? Impossible! They were not guilty. In being Christians? Equally impossible. There was not an immense multitude of Christians in Rome, and even if we understand only a few score by this *multitudo ingens* it seems impossible that the few first seized would betray the whole Christian community to such a monster as Nero. That would have been neither wise as serpent nor harmless as dove. Here then the story is unbelievable. Note again that the spectacle must have endured for a long time, else surely the Roman mob, used to such sights, would not have felt pity for a class of hated criminals who had burned two-thirds of Rome and caused unspeakable ruin and woe. And why do Suetonius (*Ner.* 38) and Dio Cassius (62, 16, 1) and Pliny (*N. H.* 17: 1, 1, 5), who all have no doubt that Nero himself ordered the conflagration, and who must have known of such a long continued slaughter of innocents, why do they

never even remotely allude to such a tremendous matter? Lastly, when did this persecution take place? Naturally one would suppose that the report started at once, while men's minds were wild with excitement, as did the rumor of Nero's fiddling mid the flames of Rome. But no one can gain such an idea from chapter 44, which mentions the report after the account of Nero's architectural reconstruction and indicates that he took severe measures not, as would be natural, in the heated state of public feeling, but only long after and because the report refused to abate. This is not indeed incredible, but it is certainly perplexing.

And what can be the force or reference of "meanwhile" (*interea*), with which the next chapter opens? If we omit chapter 44, the reference is obvious, the term is so appropriate as to be almost unavoidable: Nero was rebuilding Rome on a scale of unexampled grandeur at incalculable outlay of imperial treasures. "What an abyss of expense! Whence came the necessary funds?" involuntarily exclaims the reader. The author answers: *Meanwhile* Italy, the provinces, the allies, the free states, the very sanctuaries of the gods were devastated to meet the prodigious cost. Now insert chapter 44. At once the connection is broken, the thought is left hung in the air, extraneous and remotely related matters distract the attention, and when the subject is resumed in chapter 45, there is found nothing in chapter 44 to which the "meanwhile" can refer—for it is unreasoning to say "Nero was burning Christians and the people were moved to compassion, meanwhile the empire was plundered." We must go back to chapter 43 to find the natural attachment for chapter 45—a clear indication that the intervening chapter has been interpolated.

C. Does some one (as Von Soden) object that the style is too Tacitean not to be genuine? We reply that quite as good imitations are frequent enough. In his *Letters to*

Dead Authors Mr. Andrew Lang has reproduced admirably a dozen widely diverse styles, none of them at all like his own. Such a *tour de force* is exceptional, but it shows that the limits of possibility in such matters are very wide. Besides, are we sure that the style is really so much like that of Tacitus? Careful scrutiny has perhaps not yet been made, but there are certainly counter-indications. We pass over the well-known facts that the text is here particularly wavering; that it is strange that Tacitus should speak of Pontius Pilate merely as procurator, without specifying of what, whereas such a form of speech was most natural for the interpolator; that the extremely harsh judgment of the Christians is puzzling in the intimate friend of Pliny from whom he would almost surely have learned better; that the "vast multitude" is an exaggeration more than Tacitean and not at all paralleled by the *iacuit immensa strages* of *An. VI, 19*,¹⁷ and we would fix attention solely on one purely stylistic consideration, the expression *humani generis*. The whole sentence has sorely vexed the wits of commentators, but especially these words. Muretus (following Faernus?) boldly strikes out the word *humani* and understands by *generis* the Christian race! Acidalius sees that this cannot be and accordingly alters *humani* into *Romani*: They were condemned for hatred of the Roman race! Indeed it seems almost impossible that Tacitus should have written *humani generis*. *Everywhere* else he writes *generis humani*.¹⁸ It is in the last degree improbable that such a consummate stylist as Tacitus would here just this once deviate from his lifelong habit, especially as the inverse order produces with the

¹⁷ The slaughter is called immense because it struck "all" (*cunctos*) the implicated friends of Sejanus, without regard for age or sex or other conditions; but a multitude is huge only by its mere number.

¹⁸ As *Ann. III. 59, XII. 14, Hist. I, 30, III. 68, V. 25, Ag. 2*. Editors in general make no note of this fact. After this study was complete, the writer observed the remark of Nipperdey: "*humani generis*, Sonst sagt Tac. stets in der gewöhnlichen Ordnung *genus humanum*."

foregoing word a disagreeable hiatus: *odio humani*. No very delicate ear is needed to perceive that *odio generis* is a much pleasanter collocation. Besides the whole weight of Tacitean related usage falls against the inversion. It is the fixed custom of the historian to modify *genus* by following and not preceding words. Thus *genus hominum* (three times, almost the same as *genus humanum*), *genus animalium*, *belli*, *militum*, *mortalium*, *mortis*, *questus pensi*, *orandi*, *maiorum*, *telorum*, *spectaculorum*, *belli*, *studiorum*, *pugnae*, *Arsacis*, *vitae*, and *generis regii*. Apparent exceptions to this rule are readily seen to be due to rhetorical considerations, especially to the desire to maintain the favorite order: adjective, genitive, (modified) noun, as in *omne mortaliū genus* (*An.* XVI. 13), *novum officii genus* (*Hist.* I. 20), and to make emphatic, as in *oppidanum genus* (*An.* VI. 15), *pernix genus* (*Hist.* II. 13). We may affirm then with much confidence that the inversion in question of itself stamps the passage as not from the hand of Tacitus.

* * *

By three entirely independent lines of inquiry we are led to precisely the same result. Look at it as you will, the chapter wears the appearance of being interpolated. Indeed, it must be, not unless one of these signs fail, but unless they all fail, unless all are simultaneously and in the same sense misleading. Even if the doubt raised by each one of these separate inquiries were not very strong, even if it still left the chances two to one in favor of the genuineness, yet the chance that all three would thus simultaneously deceive would be only eight in twenty-seven, the chances would be nineteen to eight in favor of interpolation. We have no choice then. Coerced by this consilience of results, we *must* regard the passage as probably interpolated, unless there be some strong antecedent reason in favor of genuineness and against interpolation.

Is there any such reason? Certainly not. The whole history of post-Apostolic and patristic literature shows that interpolation was a most familiar favorite. In fact, it would rather seem strange if such an opportunity had been neglected. We conclude then decisively that this famous chapter, as it now stands, is with compelling probability to be ascribed to another hand than that of Cornelius Tacitus. But even if entirely genuine and uncorrupted it would still be worthless in evidence, for it merely states a rumor about an alleged occurrence of nearly a hundred years ago. Accordingly, the passage is in all likelihood inadmissible in court; but even if admitted, it could prove nothing to the point.

The allusions of Suetonius to the Christians are the following: "Judeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantur Roma expulit,"—*Claudius*, XXV. "Afflicti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae et maleficae,"—*Nero*, XVI. Both of these appear too slight for the basis of any judgment.

It will be noticed that there is no reference to the Founder of Christianity. The force of the *impulsore Chresto* is uncertain. It may refer to some Roman Jew named Chrestus, who stirred up his compatriots to riot, or it may refer to Messianic agitation among the Jewish populace, to their disputes among themselves about the Messiah, the Chrestus. Be this as it may, there is here no implication of the life and death in Galilee and Judea. Dio Cassius, however, says (IX, 6) he "did not expel" them but forbade their assembling and dissolved their clubs authorized by Gaius. On the other hand, Acts xviii. 2 refers the presence in Corinth of Aquila and Priscilla to this decree of Claudius expelling "all the Jews from Rome"—a statement almost certainly exaggerated.

The second mention occurs in a list of severe regulations made in Nero's time. If genuine, it would show

merely that "Christians" were known as early as Nero, which would add nothing to our knowledge, and that they were on some occasions condignly punished. Possibly the notice in Tacitus is merely an expansion of the brief deliverance by Suetonius. A much more probable cause of the "punishments" would be some such disturbances as occurred under Claudius *impulsore Chresto* or provoked Tiberius to expel the Jews from Rome (Suet. *Tib.* XXXVI). Among the latter were included *similia sectantes*, whom also Tiberius *Urbe submovit sub poena perpetuae servitutis, nisi obtemperassent*. The *sectantes* are thought to be converts to Judaism, possibly they were incipient Christians. The words *nisi obtemperassent* seem to indicate great turbulence or unrest among the Jews under Tiberius near the supposed date of the crucifixion. This seems intrinsically highly probable, at least to us who regard the whole Christian movement as the outcome of generations, even centuries, of agitation among Jews and their proselytes. Sharp separation between Jews and Christians does not seem possible till the second century, especially the era of Bar Cochab.

The letter of Pliny to Trajan may also be quoted in this connection. It says nothing of the origin or Founder of Christianity; at most it tells only of the practices of the Christians in Bithynia about A. D. 110. There is no implication, not even the slightest, touching the pure-human reality of the Christ or Jesus. Whether this correspondence of Trajan and Pliny be genuine or not, is accordingly quite indifferent for the purpose of this discussion.

Any investigation of the matter would be superfluous at this stage of the argument. Lucian (120-200 A. D.) in his *De Morte Peregrini*, 11, 41, in *Alexander*, 25, 31, and in the perhaps spurious *Philopatriis*, 12, makes mention of "Christians" and the "man impaled in Palestine," but only under the Antonines; Dio Cassius also, but A. D. 220.

Herewith the references to Christianity in pagan literature before A. D. 150 are exhausted. After that date the Gospel story had certainly taken definite form; it is widespread among Christians, who are themselves numerous throughout the empire; it has certainly reached the ears of the heathen, and any number of allusions in profane writers would merely attest the currency of the Gospel story, but would supply no testimony whatever to its authenticity. It seems useless then to quote this literature any further. We close this scrutiny, therefore, with this result, already announced: *Profane history supplies no testimony whatever to the pure-human character of Jesus.*

In order to estimate properly the value of this *argumentum e silentio*, we must remember that apparently the profane writers could have had no motive in suppressing information if they possessed it. Christianity was for them merely a pernicious and despicable superstition,¹⁹ they would have been rather pleased to trace it back to a criminal crucified in Jerusalem. On the other hand, it is unlikely that any reference by the pagans would have been allowed by the Christians to perish. These latter were very jealous of all such material of argumentation and cherished it, as is shown vividly by the admitted fact that they even invented it diligently.

Possibly the heathen may have felt little interest in the crucifixion, its antecedents and its consequents; but the same cannot be said of Josephus. As a Palestinian Jew, a professional historian and a chronicler, it seems altogether impossible that he should not have known or have heard of the Life and Death of Jesus. He tells us minutely enough if somewhat obscurely of John the Baptist (*Arch.* 18, 5, 2), but John was in no way comparable with Jesus. In fact, he

¹⁹ The terms used by Tac. Plin. Suet. are strikingly alike and suggest, but do not prove, some kind of interdependence or common dependence: *Exitibilis superstitio, superstitionem pravam et immodicam, superstitionis novae et malificae.*

fills his pages with events altogether trivial by the side of the words and deeds of the Nazarene. It is not only to us at this 1900 years' remove, in the perspective of history, that the events appear in such relative significance. There was nothing in the career of John to match the execution on Calvary: nothing to pair with the works of Jesus, minimize them as you may. If Jesus was pure-human, then he was an astounding personality, in name and fame the Baptist must have been comparatively insignificant. Consider, too, how closely the twain were related, the Forerunner and the Messiah. For the gossipy annalist to know of John, but not of Jesus, would be as if the contemporary historian of the Reformation should know of Zwingli but not of Luther.

We dismiss then the hypothesis that Josephus was ignorant of the Christ, if the latter was pure-human, as altogether impossible. But knowing of him, could he have passed him by in silence intentionally? It seems hardly possible. If Josephus was a Christian (in secret), surely he would let pass no such opportunity to do his faith inestimable service. If he was sincerely an orthodox Jew (as almost certainly he was, so the Christian writers themselves attest), he must have believed that his countrymen did right in rejecting the pretender, he must have rejoiced in their action,—why then suppress it? Or even if he was uncertain in mind, then he must have pondered the matter, must have deemed it of high importance, and as it occupied his thoughts, why did he forbear all expression? No! we can not understand the silence of the historian, except on the supposition that Jesus was unknown to him historically. It was precisely this circumstance that puzzled the Christians themselves of the early centuries and induced one of them to cut the Gordian knot by interpolating the section 3. In fact, the marvel would be if some one had not made just such an interpolation. As already observed,

such insertion of apt material at proper places was a favorite form of that early logic.

Bishop Lightfoot admits with apparent irritation that Josephus has preserved a "stolid silence about Christianity," but thinks this "can not be owing to ignorance, for a sect which had been singled out for years before he wrote, as a mark for imperial vengeance at Rome, must have been only too well known in Judea." Of course, the allusion is to the Neronic persecution, and the reasoning sounds plausible. But we have just seen that this persecution is a matter for the very gravest doubt. Moreover, we see no reason why the Messianic agitators in Rome should take their cue from Palestine, or why the name Christian might not have been known in Rome even earlier than in Palestine. In fact, the name was not Palestinian, if we may believe Acts xi. 26,²⁰ it was applied to the Disciples at Antioch and was for an uncertain period only on the lips of enemies (not, however, *Christians* but *Chrestians*).²¹ We see, indeed, no reason why such a movement might not have started independently in various places and nearly simultaneously. That there was originally any unity or central dependence in the propaganda is decisively negatived by Acts in more than one place, as already set forth in *Der vorchristliche Jesus*. It seems unquestionable that the greatest variety of faith prevailed in the early communities; from Rome to Jerusalem no inference is allowable.

Much more, however, not only does the fact that the Gentile called groups of the new faith by the contemptuous name of "Chrestians," by no means imply that these recognized the name and thought of themselves as distinct from Jews and proselytes, but the opposite seems attested by Acts xxi. 26, where it is said to Paul, "Thou seest, brother,

²⁰ Cf. xxvi. 28; 1 Peter iv, 16.

²¹ From *Χρηστὸς* = *Χριστός*, Blass, *Gram. N. T. Grk.*, pp. 8, 63.

how many myriads there are among the Jews of them that have believed, and all are zealots for the law." These then had by no means separated themselves from the faith of their fathers, they were still one with the people.

If then Josephus knew of Christianity in Palestine, as is likely, he knew of it as one among many shades of religious enthusiasm or conviction, which had not detached itself from the general mass, which had not yet taken definite shape and outline. As thus inchoate and nebulous or confounded with the Essenes, it may have appeared to him of little significance and easily have been passed over when he treated of the principal sects of Jewish philosophy (*B. J.* II, 8, *Arch.* XVIII, 1). *It is only when we assume the current hypothesis concerning the origin of Christianity*, that the silence of Josephus appears strange and "stolid." But if it came not by observation, so that one could say "Lo here!" if its coming was like the gentle play of summer lightning, illuming the whole circuit of the Mediterranean, shining all round nearly simultaneously, it may very well have long escaped recognition as a distinct phenomenon. Especially if, as seems now to be proved decisively,²² it was in large measure a *mystery*-religion propagated in great secrecy, if it was first heard in the ear and only much later proclaimed on the house-top,²³ if the "beautiful deposit"²⁴ of doctrine was committed to the novitiate under solemn and awful circumstances and only after "the beautiful confession" had been made under imposition of hands "before many witnesses,"²⁵ then such a secret cult carefully "guarded" might long escape the notice or at least the interested attention of a Josephus. Such reflections seem to break completely the force of the great bishop's argu-

²² In the writer's forthcoming book, *Ecce Deus*.

²³ Matt. x. 27; Luke xii. 3.

²⁴ παραθήκη, 1 Tim. vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 12, 14.

²⁵ 1 Tim. vi. 12-13.

ment, of which the sinew lies in the tacit assumption of all that theory of the beginnings of Christianity which we set out to disprove.

How then shall we sum up the situation? Thus:

a. It is morally certain that the Josephine passage (*Arch.* XVIII, 3, 3) is a Christian interpolation.

b. The Josephine passage concerning James (*Arch.* XX. 9, 1) has certainly been tampered with by Christian hands and as it now reads is almost surely an interpolation.

c. The chapter in Tacitus lies under the very gravest suspicions.

d. The sentences in Suetonius *may be* genuine, but they attest nothing strictly relevant. Like may be said of the Pliny-Trajan correspondence.

e. Even if the utmost should be conceded to these pagan authorities, they would still bear witness to two things only: (1) That so early as Nero there were so-called Christians or Chrestians in Rome, and that they fell under the extreme displeasure of that emperor. (2) That so early as perhaps A. D. 117 the origin of the Christian Cult was referred to a Christ that was said to have been crucified in Judea by Pontius Pilate (say A. D. 30), 80 or 90 years, nearly three generations, before.

Further than this these profane depositions do not go. It is seen at once that they do not touch the real point at issue, and we may now re-state as fully proved our first thesis: *Extant profane literature is silent concerning the life, career, and death of a pure-human Founder of Christianity.*

But may there not be non-extant profane testimony, over which the oblivion of centuries has settled? Impossible! For remember that the Christians were keen-witted and numerous, that they were nurtured in age-long controversy, that they had every reason, incentive, and opportunity to preserve any and every profane witness to the

traditional origin of their system, which would have been invaluable in their debate with unbelievers. Men like Justin who peered into every cranny and crevice of Scripture for confirmation of their story, like Clement and the apologists who ransacked every corner of pagan literature for materials of argument, like Melito and Tertullian and the whole industrious hive of interpolators and pseudonymists who invented history and scriptures wholesale as needed,—not six generations of these one and all would have neglected or overlooked any and every profane testimony in their own behalf, when even a single one would have been the end of controversy.

No! The fact that no Christian writer cites any such testimony is decisive proof that there was no such testimony to cite, and we may now finally affirm that the negative external witness, of contemporaneous history and literature, is as clear, as strong, as complete, as conclusive, as in the nature of the case it is possible for such witness to be. The negative internal witness, of the New Testament itself, has already been found to be eloquent and unequivocal. Positive counter-proofs in great number and variety all converge like meridians upon the same thesis. In a word, the pure-human Jesus of the critics is denied and the Divine Jesus of Proto-Christianity is affirmed by every form of consideration that has yet been adduced. What else is needed to shape the judgment of unbiased reason?

ADDENDUM.

The reader may not unnaturally ask, "But what has the illustrious Guglielmo Ferrero to say on this subject?" His notable work on the *Greatness and Decline of Rome* comes down to A. D. 14, just half a century short of the Conflagration, but elsewhere, as in his Lecture on Nero (*Characters and Events of Roman History*, pp. 103-141), he glances at the flames, though scarcely with a severely

critical eye. "The history of Cæsar's family, as it has been told by Tacitus and Suetonius," he expressly rates as a mere "sensational novel, a legend containing not much more truth than the legend of Atrides" (p. 138); and yet, strange to say, precisely where this novel is least credible, where it ceases to be intelligible even, and where the apparent attestation is reduced one-half, being that of Tacitus alone unsupported by Suetonius, precisely there he accepts it eagerly, not merely at par but rather at a premium, and without the smallest grain of critical salt to save it. Witness the following quotations:

"An inquiry into the causes of the conflagration was ordered. The inquest came to a strange conclusion. The fire had been started by a small religious sect whose name most people then learned for the first time: the Christians.

"How did the Roman authorities come to such a conclusion? That is one of the greatest mysteries of universal history, and no one will ever be able to clear it. If the explanation of the disaster as accepted by the people was absurd, the official explanation was still more so" (p. 131).

And again: "...but it certainly was not philosophical considerations of this kind that led the Roman authorities to rage against the Christians. The problem, I repeat, is insoluble. However this may be, the Christians were declared responsible for the fire; a great number were taken into custody, sentenced to death, executed in different ways, during the festivals that Nero offered to the people to appease them. Possibly Paul himself was one of the victims of this persecution" (p. 133).

"Behold how small a fire how great a wood enkindles!" How much more about this "inquiry" and "inquest" does Ferrero know than did Tacitus, and yet Tacitus is Ferrero's only authority, and that too an authority already emphatically discredited as "a sensational novel"! The plant of History would seem to be a hardy annual and at times

might be likened to a grain of mustard seed. It is interesting to surprise it now and then as it grows.

But the important point is that the brilliant Italian distinctly and repeatedly declares "the problem is insoluble." And well he may. For while no one will question the keenness of his analytic faculty or the vigor of his reconstructive imagination, yet even these and more can hardly avail to make clear the general detestation of the few "pious idealists" whom "the people used to call Christians" while the same name had never yet been heard "by the most of the people"; or to explain how "a great number" (strictly "an immense multitude"—as Church and Brodrib render it) could be sentenced and executed out of "a small and peaceful congregation."

Gibbon and more especially Schiller have argued that it was the Jews who were slaughtered in such numbers and amid such torments. Impossible, as we have seen; for in that case Josephus would have known and made mention of such a calamity to his countrymen. And why should Tacitus commit the blunder of substituting the nearly unknown Christians for the familiar Jews? Others have guessed that the Jews under the patronage of Popæa incited Nero against the Christians—their own kinsmen! But not only is this conjecture a wholly gratuitous calumny on the Jews, but it presupposes a bitter hatred and an ancient grudge of Jews against their Christian brothers, such as was unreal and impossible at that time even in Jerusalem, much more among the liberal Jews of the Dispersion (Compare Acts xxi. 20, xxviii. 17-25). Moreover, if the Jews had slandered the Christians in such infamous and ruinous fashion, why does not at least one among so many Christian authors, all of whom would have eagerly exploited any such fact or any such rumor, make some mention or give some hint of such a prodigious iniquity? No! Ferrero is right, and his admission is sig-

nificant: it is quite impossible to understand the "mystery" of the Tacitean passage regarded as genuine, "no one will ever be able to clear it." What then is the obvious suggestion? Is it not that the incomprehensible chapter is spurious, or at least altered beyond recognition from some unknown original?

The temptation is great to hazard some speculation as to the genesis of this chapter (44), and to connect it with the strange fortunes of the *Annals*, as preserved in the two unique Medicean manuscripts; however, we will not put forth upon any such sea of conjecture, but will hug close the safe shore of Ferrero's avowal that the assumed "genuineness of the passage in Tacitus,"—so far from being "not open to reasonable doubt,"—confronts us with an insoluble riddle, "one of the greatest mysteries of universal history."

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